

January 28, 2019

Board of Selectpersons
(Attn: Mr. Matthew Frank)
Town of Harrison
20 Front Street
Harrison, Maine 04040

Dear Select Board:

The Pondicherry Group is a group of experienced and knowledgeable community members who have been examining this community's healthcare needs and services since mid-2018. After reviewing the events of 2018 and related health developments in the Bridgton area, we have concluded that Central Maine Healthcare's actions have seriously damaged access-to-care and the quality of care for the populations of Harrison and the entire Lakes Region. We believe this situation is both critical and unacceptable.

On January 15, 2019, the Pondicherry Group sent a like letter to the Town of Bridgton's Board of Selectmen (Select Board) in advance of our presentation on February 12th at 5pm. The Chairman of the Board of Selectman, Lee Eastman, sent a response dated January 16, 2019. We have included a copy of Chairman Eastman's letter for your review and reference. We are writing to ask the Town of Harrison Select Board to;

- I. Support a vote of no-confidence regarding Central Maine Healthcare's ownership and management of its Lakes Region health care assets (i.e. Bridgton Hospital, Primary Care Offices...etc.); and
- II. Support our proposed request that Central Maine Healthcare divest its ownership in said assets to either of the following local legal entities;
 - A. **To be formed, a locally owned and managed not-for-profit healthcare holding company which will establish management, operations and financial affiliations with MaineHealth**, a Portland-based not-for-profit family of high-quality providers and healthcare organizations committed to the health and well-being of the communities and people it serves. MaineHealth is the largest healthcare organization in Maine and a leading healthcare provider serving northern New Hampshire (Carroll County). MaineHealth is recognized as one of the nation's top integrated healthcare delivery networks.
 - B. **Or directly to MaineHealth**, which includes Maine Medical Center, the Barbara Bush Children's Hospital, and nine regional hospitals much like Bridgton Hospital. MaineHealth is already the provider of preference for most people in Bridgton and the Lakes Region.

We offer the following as evidence causing our concerns;

1. An alarming rise in quality of care issues as identified by State and Federal Agencies, as well as the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), See below; ^{1 2 3 4 5}
2. In response to the sharp decline in the fortunes and leadership of the parent organization (CMH) a majority of the Medical Staff Leadership at Central Maine Healthcare (inclusive of Bridgton Hospital, Rumford Hospital and Central

¹ <https://www.centralmaine.com/2018/03/09/cmmc-keeps-its-accreditation-after-addressing-concerns-over-infections/>

² <http://www.sunjournal.com/cmmc-scores-among-lowest-for-safety-in-maine/>

³ <http://www.mainebiz.biz/article/20171228/NEWS0101/171229959/four-maine-hospitals-cited-by-medicare-for-infection-injury-rates>

⁴ <https://www.pressherald.com/2018/08/31/lewiston-hospitals-illegally-turned-away-patients-experiencing-mental-health-crises/>

⁵ <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/eds/maine-hospitals-turned-mental-health-patients-away-from-er-state-finds.html>

Maine Medical Center) have voted no confidence in the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of CMH. Nevertheless, the majority of the CMH Board of Director's voted to support the CEO. See below;^{6 7 8 9 10}

3. Over 50% of Central Maine Healthcare's primary care and specialist physicians, including many physician leaders, have left their jobs over the last 18-months, resulting in an increasingly dangerous loss of access to health care services for all who live and visit Bridgton and the Lakes Region.^{11 12 13 14}
4. CMH's poorly implemented electronic health record (Cerner) system that has created quality of care concerns, delayed and mis-scheduled appointments, and put the lives of people with serious and chronic care needs at risk. See below;^{15 16 17}

Central Maine Healthcare has demonstrated a significant change of focus away from Bridgton and the Lakes Region as it touts the opening of a new, first of its kind 'Care Center'¹⁸ in Topsham while our region's urgent concern is the recent resignations and departures of doctors from the Lakes Region practices. Furthermore, it is our understanding that more physicians and staff resignations have been received and/or are forthcoming in the weeks ahead. Our information indicates that more than 50% of the Lakes Region doctors have resigned and departed without replacement.

It appears that CMH's management of its Lakes Region healthcare assets has resulted in the continuing downward spiral in both access to care and needed services that began in 2018. The Pondicherry Group believes that CMH has proven to not only be unable to resolve these negative trends but continues to be unresponsive to our region's loss of access, services and care.

We herewith request the Town of Harrison Select Board's support of the Pondicherry Group's recommendation to the CMH Board to transfer back the assets that the community gave to Central Maine Healthcare in 1999. Our town and region have always put strong emphasis on excellence in healthcare, and its current decline calls for immediate action. We believe this recommendation to extricate our medical facilities and services from an inadequate provider and to ally them instead with the highest quality integrated delivery system in Maine and the Mt. Washington Valley of New Hampshire, reflects the sentiment of many (>50%) who live in and visit the Lakes Region.

The Pondicherry Group is most appreciative of the opportunity to present our findings and recommendations at the next Town of Harrison Select Board Meeting as a step forward to resolve the Lakes Region's healthcare crisis.

Respectfully,

The Pondicherry Group

⁶ <https://www.pressherald.com/2018/07/19/bridgton-hospital-medical-staff-votes-no-confidence-in-parent-company-ceo/>

⁷ <https://www.pressherald.com/2018/07/26/rumford-hospital-is-the-2nd-to-vote-no-confidence-in-its-owners-ceo/>

⁸ <https://www.pressherald.com/2018/07/30/central-maine-medical-center-staff-vote-no-confidence-in-parent-companys-ceo/>

⁹ <https://bangordailynews.com/2018/08/02/news/lewiston-auburn/maine-hospital-system-board-backs-ceo-despite-no-confidence-votes/>

¹⁰ <https://bangordailynews.com/2018/08/27/business/financial-recovery-proves-painful-for-maine-hospital-group/>

¹¹ <https://www.pressherald.com/2018/08/12/maine-hospital-systems-woes-prompt-staff-exodus/>

¹² <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/hospital-management-administration/27-of-central-maine-healthcare-physicians-flee-amid-ceo-dispute.html>

¹³ <https://www.pressherald.com/2018/08/21/letter-to-the-editor-patients-lose-when-hospital-systems-have-high-physician-turnover/>

¹⁴ <https://www.pressherald.com/2018/08/16/vice-chairman-of-central-maine-healthcare-board-has-resigned/>

¹⁵ <https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/ehrs/central-maine-healthcare-ceo-says-ehr-woes-contributed-to-high-physician-turnover.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.clinical-innovation.com/topics/ehr-emr/emr-workload-linked-central-maine-troubles>

¹⁷ <http://www.bridgton.com/president-system-has-no-intent-to-close-bridgton-hospital/>

¹⁸ <http://www.mainebiz.biz/article/20180808/NEWS01/180809944/central-maine-healthcare-s-new-topsham-care-center-is-up-and-running/>